

WHICH WAY?

By

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THE INDUSTRIAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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WHICH WAY?

ISAIAH 30.21 “ *This is the way, walk ye in it.*”

There are only two main roads out of my See City of Georgetown, one going eastwards along the coast and the other southwards towards the great equatorial forests far inland, which makes it easier for me at home than here in London to illustrate the moral choice that every man has to make. There are, in fact, only two possible ways of life and our Lord has told us about them both. There is the broad easy road of self-satisfaction and self-indulgence : and there is the narrow rugged path, the way of discipleship, the way of discipline, the way of the Cross. Let us not be deceived by the complexity and diversity of modern development into thinking otherwise. There are only two ways of life open to us and every one of us is journeying along one or the other. We must choose by which of them we will travel; and in choosing the road we must perforce first decide upon our ultimate destination. At certain times the travellers get a fleeting glimpse of the distant landscape ahead and of the nature of the country towards which they are journeying, but often they are too preoccupied with surrounding conditions to notice it. Those on the road of materialism have recently seen before them the mushroom-cloud of the Hydrogen Bomb, and some of them have paused in fear to consider their earthly peril, if not their eternal destiny. But our Lord has already told us plainly enough that the broad way leads only to misery and destruction and

that it is the narrow way that leads to eternal life.
 “ This is the way, walk ye in it.”

Christ the Lord of all life

We are told that more people today than ever are “ interested in religion ”. I wonder how many of them know what the word religion means or have any idea of the demands that religion makes. Many people talk of religion as though it were something extra to add to everyday existence, something “ to help us to be good ”, something like a useful little hobby or even a patent medicine to cure all ills. I suppose that all religions make considerable demands upon their followers, and I know from experience that the Catholic Religion makes supreme and most exacting demands upon all who accept it. To the churchman Jesus Christ is the Lord of all life. Every thought, word and deed must be judged by His perfect standard. And since the individual believer is made in Holy Baptism a living member of the Church which is Christ’s Body and of which Christ Himself is the Head, he can say only “ it is no longer I that live but Christ that liveth in me ”. The Christian has a Duty towards God and a Duty towards his neighbour which require him to act in a manner that is often clean contrary to the ways of the world about him, and the resultant tension soon becomes apparent. Sooner or later he discovers for himself that he cannot serve God and Mammon. Wordly ambition suggests one line of action in business while Christian discipleship demands another. Personal pride urges one kind of relationship with other human beings—

especially those of a different class, or race, or colour: Christian charity, which is all embracing, requires him to honour all men and to love the brotherhood. It can be most uncomfortable to be a professing Christian because the Christian Religion is concerned with every phase of life and is constantly making new and more exacting demands. Christ is the King and His Kingdom is bounded by no frontiers.

Not only good intentions

To live as a Christian can never be easy—indeed it would be quite impossible but for the all-sufficient grace of God which is freely given us—and it is made even more difficult by the problems that are created by the complexities of modern civilisation. Even when a man has the will to live as a Christian he is often faced with situations in which it is by no means easy to decide what is the right thing to do. The social, political and economic implications of the Gospel pose problems which seldom admit of a simple solution. The right answer to such relatively easy questions as:—Should a Christian take part in a strike, and if so in what circumstances and under what conditions? If an employer honestly cannot afford to pay fair wages should he pay less, or should he close down and put his workers out of employment? Or again, is big business justified in killing smaller businesses in order that the consumer may obtain cheaper goods?—is by no means obvious. It follows, therefore, that those who are pledged to the Christian way of life need to have not only good intentions but also an intelligent understanding of the application of

Christian principles, acquired by serious thought and study and hallowed by prayer. To this branch of Christian education I.C.F. has made a valuable contribution and will, I am sure, continue to do so. We who live in countries overseas have our peculiar problems as you in England have yours. Many of these problems are similar but some are quite different. But as improved communications and a growing interdependence of one part of the world upon another bring us all closer together, your problems increasingly become ours and our problems become yours as well. The recent immigration on a large scale of West Indians to the United Kingdom illustrates my point. I earnestly ask you to consider whether the time is not ripe, therefore, for I.C.F. greatly to extend its activities by voluntarily accepting new and substantial commitments overseas and making its work and fellowship world-wide within the Anglican Communion. And I wonder whether Christians who do not belong to our Communion could not be more closely associated with us in proclaiming and upholding Christian principles.

A united Christian front

In British Guiana for the past twelve years we have had a Christian Social Council on which all the major denominations are represented. At the present time I am the Chairman, a Methodist Minister is the Vice-Chairman, a Roman Catholic Priest is the Secretary and the members come from nine different denominations. The Council has from time to time arranged study-groups and held public meetings and has issued

statements explaining the application of Christian principles to such vital matters as Education, Marriage, Family Life, Housing and Wages. Recently the Council issued a combined statement on the Meaning of Easter. Our rule is that we make no public statement upon which we are not unanimous : and it is remarkable how frequently we are able to come to a common mind upon social and moral questions. In the course of years the Council has quietly won for itself such a degree of recognition and confidence that it is now consulted by the government upon proposed new social legislation and other such matters and its views are treated with due respect and consideration. The Council, as a body, is now entrusted with the responsibility for arranging the programme of religious broadcasts, both from the several churches and from the studio, and is asked to nominate members to serve as film censors and on probation work and juvenile employment boards. A few years ago in negotiations with the Department of Education about denominational schools, the Members of the Council were able to speak with one voice, and as a result secured very favourable terms in the final Dual-control Agreement with the government and an arrangement that has worked so well that it might well serve as a model for other countries. At the present critical time in history when the forces of materialism are mustered in formidable array against us, it is surely necessary that there should be a strong witness from a united front to the Christian way of life.

Guiana shows the way

In my own Diocese of Guiana we have just formed the Guild of St. Paul, which is designed to be a fellowship of men pledged to the study and practice of the application of Christian principles to all departments of human life. Its membership is open to all who are breadwinners and its centre of unity is the Altar. This Guild will operate through small groups formed in the several parishes which will meet regularly for prayer and to assist in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, and for study and discussion of moral and social problems. The members will then try, by word and example, to exert a strong Christian influence in their workshops and offices and in their daily social and business contacts, praying for grace to act effectively as the leaven within the lump. There is, of course, nothing strange or new in this, but I am telling you about it because it directly concerns you. Our Guild of St. Paul is affiliated to I.C.F., and we are indebted to the staff of I.C.F. for the advice and help that they have given us in constituting the Guild. Such an organisation as this Guild of ours would have an important part to play in our national life at any time, but just now when British Guiana is passing through a critical period in its history and is committed to a most ambitious programme of economic development and social improvement, its opportunities are greater and its responsibilities correspondingly heavier. I know that we can count upon the continued interest and assistance of I.C.F. in the development of the work of the Guild, and I earnestly appeal to you who belong to I.C.F. here in England for your prayers for us in this venture.

Our responsibility and opportunity

Often enough we deplore the state of affairs existing in the world about us, but all too seldom do most of us consider how large a share of the blame for it we ourselves must bear. There can be scarcely an office, or a workshop, or a trade union, or a government department in which there is not at least one Christian man or woman. What would not any group of political fanatics like the Communists give for the opportunities that we already possess ! In many places Christians are indeed bearing faithful witness, and we ought to thank God for it: but if only we were all more alive to our opportunities we could turn the world upside down within this present generation. And our witness would be so much more effective if it were better informed by the serious and systematic study of social and moral problems in the light of our Christian knowledge and strengthened and sanctified by Christian prayer and fellowship.

“ *This is the way, walk ye in it.* ” There are only two ways of life and we must choose which of them we will take. On the one hand we see the saints courageously climbing the straight and narrow path, and we hear them calling to us to join their glad company. On the other hand we see the worldlings marching overconfidently along the broad road of self-indulgent materialism and we hear them scoffing at those who have chosen the higher and more rugged path. But we cannot fail to notice that by far the greater number of travellers are just drifting along what appears to be the easier road, without looking where they are going and apparently without caring much either. The

greatest menace to society are not those who are deliberately wicked, for those who have wilfully chosen this way are comparatively few. Those who are the greatest danger, to themselves and to others, are the stupid people, the thoughtless folk who have never stopped to consider whence they came or whither they are going; those who have no set purpose or direction in life. But there are unmistakable signs today that at least some of these aimless wanderers are beginning to consider their position. World events in this atomic age have perhaps helped to bring them to their senses.

Here lies our opportunity to serve our time and generation. Here lies our opportunity to carry out our Lord's commission to His Church to preach the Gospel. But unless we want to be blind guides we must take the trouble to equip ourselves for the task so that we can say with absolute assurance—"This is the way, walk ye in it." We shall do this very humbly, knowing how frequently we ourselves have lost our sense of direction and stumbled from the path of righteousness, but also with complete confidence because we can rely upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit and because we can draw upon the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church and the Sacramental grace which activates the whole Body of Christ of which we are the living members. And our witness must be not merely to the social implications of Christianity, for our Faith will not bear fragmentation, but to the whole Gospel of God, to Him Who is to us and to all men the Way, the Truth and the Life, our Saviour and our King.

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